

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4982

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 7044

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, IN

SUBJECT: DELHI COMMUNAL RIOTS

BEGIN SUMMARY: HINDU- MUSLIM RIOTS BROKE OUT IN OLD DELHI JUNE 12. OFFICIAL REPORTS SAID ONE PERSON WAS KILLED IN POLICE FIRING; PRESS REPORTS INDICATE SEVERAL SCORE WERE INJURED. LOSS OF GOODS AND PROPERTY IS ESTIMATED AT RS. 10 MILLION (\$1.3 MILLION). A CURFEW AND HEAVY POLICE PATROLLING HAVE RESTORED ORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. RIOTING BROKE OUT IN LARGE MARKET AND RESIDENTIAL AREA OF OLD DELHI EVENING OF JUNE 12 REPORTEDLY WHEN MUSLIM AND HINDU GROUPS OF YOUNG TOUGHS CLASHED OVER THE TEASING OF AN UNACCOMPANIED GIRL. THE MUSLIMS BEGIN FIREBOMBING SHOPS IN NORTH INDIA'S LARGEST WHOLESALE MARKET (SADAR BAZAR), AND HINDUS RETALIATED WITH ATTACKS ON MUSLIM TENEMENTS. THE POLICE-- SOON ASSISTED BY PROVINCIAL ARMED CONSTABULARY UNITS FROM RAJASTHAN AND MADHYA PRADESH-- MOVED IN. TEARGAS INITIALLY PROVED INEFFECTIVE. SEVERAL POLICEMEN, INCLUDING AN OFFICER, WERE INJURED BY BRICKS AND STONES HURLED AT
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THEM BY RIOTERS. RIOTING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL JUNE 13. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, POLICE ARRESTED 132 RIOTERS. ANOTHER 172 WERE DETAINED FOR MINOR VIOLATIONS, THEN RELEASED. A POLICE CURFEW (FIRST IN A DECADE) CONTINUES UNTIL JUNE 16. HEAVY POLICE PATROLLING, INCLUDING OTHER DELHI AREAS SUSCEPTIBLE TO COMMUNAL VIOLENCE, SUCH AS JAMA MASJID, HAS ALSO BEEN CONTINUED AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE. ORDER HAS BEEN RESTORED... LOSSES ARE HEAVY-- AN ESTIMATED 150-200 SHOPS GUTTED AND PROPERTY LOSSES OF AT LEAST RS. 10 MILLION (\$1.3 MILLION). ALTHOUGH THE POLICE MOVED QUICKLY, LOSSES MAY AFFECT MANY AREA RETAILERS. AREA IN WHICH RIOTING OCCURRED INHABITED LARGELY BY MUSLIMS BUT MOST OF SHOPKEEPERS ARE HINDUS. TENSION IN AREA HAS BEEN INCREASING FOR SOME TIME AND HARRASSMENT OF SHOPKEEPERS AND UNESCORTED WOMEN HAD BEEN GROWING.

2. COMMENT: FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCY OF BANGLADESH AND THE " BURIAL" OF JINNAH' S TWO- NATION THEORY, FACILE OPTIMISM AMONG INDIAN POLITICIANS LED TO THE BELIEF THAT COMMUNAL DISTURBANCES WOULD NOT RECUR. IN REALITY, MANY MUSLIMS REGRETTE THE WEAKENING OF PAKISTAN, TO WHICH THEY FELT SOME EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT AND WHOSE EXISTENCE ACTED AS A RESTRAINT ON HINDU COMMUNALISTS. MOUNTING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES DURING THIS SUMMER HAVE SPARKED RIOTING IN SEVERAL STATES (BIHAR, KASHMIR, MAHARASHTRA, UTTAR PRADESH) WHICH OFTEN TOOK ON COMMUNAL OVERTONES. CONTINUED DISTURBANCES, WHICH THE POLICE SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO KEEP IN HAND, ARE ALMOST INEVITABLE DURING THE PRESENT PERIOD OF ECONOMIC STAGNATION, INFLATION, AND POLITICAL FLUX. EXAGGERATED RUMORS OF WHAT OCCURRED IN DELHI MAY SPREAD TO OTHER AREAS, WITH POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER DISTURBANCES.

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